

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-6. (canceled)

7. (previously presented) A method of prioritizing packets in a queue with a single output, where the packets are each addressed to a respective one of plural receiving units, the method comprising the steps of:

indicating that packets addressed to one of the receiving units are to be released from the queue with a lower priority than other packets not addressed to the one receiving unit; and

exchanging two of the packets for each other in the queue when a first of the two packets is addressed to the one receiving unit and a second of the two packets subsequent to the first packet is not addressed to the one receiving unit.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the exchanging step occurs only in a predetermined plurality of the packets at the beginning of the queue.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the exchanging step occurs each time the lead packet in the queue is released, until the packets addressed to the one

receiving unit are no longer to be released with a lower priority.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the exchanging step occurs within a time period for sending one of the packets.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising the steps of indicating that the packets addressed to the one receiving unit are no longer to be released with a lower priority and thereafter releasing the packets from the queue without changing their order.

12. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the indicating step comprises the steps of sending from the one receiving unit a convergence notice signal indicating that packets addressed to the one receiving unit are to be released from the queue with a lower priority.

13. (previously presented) A method of prioritizing packets in a queue with a single output, where the packets are each addressed to a respective one of plural receiving units, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a notice that packets addressed to one of the receiving units are to be released from the queue with a lower priority than other packets;

for only a predetermined plurality of packets at a beginning of the queue, reversing an order of two consecutive packets in the queue when a first of the two consecutive packets

is addressed to the one receiving unit and a second of the two consecutive packets is addressed to another of the receiving units; and

repeating the first two steps after each release of a lead packet from the queue, until the packets addressed to the one receiving unit are no longer to be released with a lower priority.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, further comprising step of sending from the one receiving unit a convergence notice signal, which is the notice that packets addressed to the one receiving unit are to be released from the queue with a lower priority than other packets.

15. (previously presented) A method of prioritizing packets in a queue with a single output connected to plural output paths, the method comprising the steps of:

addressing each of the packets to a respective one of plural receiving units on the plural output paths;

receiving a convergence notice signal indicating that packets addressed to one of the receiving units are to be released from the queue with a lower priority than packets not addressed to the one receiving unit; and

in only a predetermined plurality of packets at a beginning of the queue, reversing an order of two packets in the queue when a first of the two packets is addressed to the one

receiving unit and a second of the two packets following the first packet is not addressed to the one receiving unit.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, further comprising step of sending the convergence notice signal from the one receiving unit.